GCSS-MC

Ready to put the pieces together.

by Randy F. Delarm & LtCol Ronald Eckert, USMC(Ret)

'With the selection of Accenture as our systems integrator partner, all the big pieces are in place to move ahead, on schedule, with making the GCSS-MC (Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps) a reality," said BGen William D. Catto, Commanding General (CG), Marine Corps Systems Command (MarCorSysCom). "We have to bring advanced technology to the Operating Forces at the earliest possible date."

LtGen Richard L. Kelly, Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (DC I&L), also recognized the importance of modern technology and a top-notch systems integrator by confirming:

> GCSS-MC technology is the backbone of the Marine Corps logistics modernization program. Over the past year we have used creative acquisition processes to select two critical partners—Oracle, to provide their e-business suite of software applications, and Accenture LLC, our systems integrator (SI), to implement the software applications.

Accenture will be required to replace and integrate Marine Corps legacy systems to enable more streamlined processes. (See Figure 1.)

Late 2004 and the first half of 2005 have been successful periods for the GCSS-MC program. Ensuring both quality performance and schedule adherence for the leading information technology (IT) investment program in the Marine Corps is challenging, but our strong team of acquisition, software, integration, and change management experts is showing that a dedication to deliver the best logistics system for our Marines is paying off. Here's how we got to where we are today. (See Figure 2.)

In the Beginning

As logistics transformation swept through the Department of Defense in the late 1990s, the basic case for change focused on improving processes and buying modern technology. The Marine Corps shared this vision, and early analysis confirmed that outdated processes, dependent on aging legacy systems, were the cause of logistics-related problems. With battlefields changing from traditional to irregular, demands to improve logistics information and provide better support for the combatants were increasing.

The commitment to provide improved processes enabled by better technology produced the GCSS-MC vision as a solution to a rapidly growing need for better data and a more effective logistics chain. The Information Age dawned for Marine airground task force (MAGTF) logistics.

Before starting to acquire new technology, a few basic steps were necessary. First, requirements needed to be defined. This meant teamwork to develop improved business processes and document information flows. The result was the logistics operational architecture that showed information "touchpoints" and "use cases" that would dramatically improve the Marine Corps' logistics model. The powerful combination of business process reengineering (BPR) and new software could deliver logistics support in a way never imagined even a decade ago. We set out to achieve this goal by organizing a highly collaborative team to:
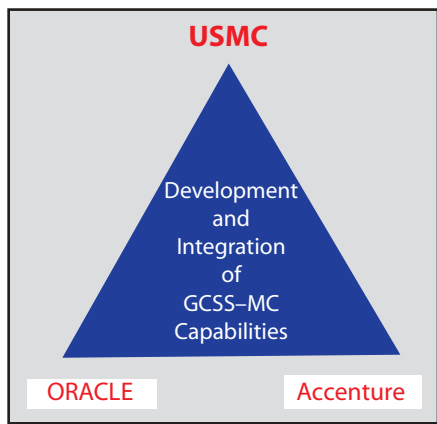

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Development and Integration of GCSS–MC Capabilities

ORACLE   Accenture

Figure 1.

GCSS-MC: Key Events Snapshot

2003	2004	2005
• Joint Requirement Oversight Council approves ORD • GCSS-MC established as a program of record • Enhanced range and depth of PMO staff • MarCorSysCom approves GCSS-MC/Logistics Chain Management (LCM) requirements • Major stakeholders accept GCSS-MC/LCM as enterprise effort	• Designated leading Marine Corps IT investment program • OSD designates GCSS-MC/LCM as ACAT 1AM special interest • Logistics subject matter experts assigned to PMO • Milestone A completed • ORACLE named as software provider for GCSS-MC/LCM business applications	• Communications and change management activities begin • Milestone B preparation • Small-scale modeling for tactical communications planned • Accenture selected as SI • Program implementation planning begins • ORACLE training for program staff

Figure 2.

- Build requirements.
- Establish the acquisition strategy.
- Acquire the software.
- Obtain technical resources.
- Design, develop, test, and field commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) software.

This challenge became a dual responsibility shared by LtGen Kelly and BGen Catto. Their teamwork has been a critical component in driving change. High-quality analyses, concept validation, and interface with the Operating Forces and the Department of the Navy (DoN) have produced an enduring foundation with strong acquisition fundamentals for the road ahead. The GCSS-MC operational requirements document (ORD) approval in late 2003 was key to establishing the program and creating a position in the Fiscal Year 2004 Program Objective Memorandum (POM 04). The threshold was crossed.

What the Marines Accomplished

Gen Michael. W. Hagee, 33d Commandant of the Marine Corps, on 20 January 2004, put his stamp of approval on the program. In rapid order he directed a Marine administrative message, a personal-for message, and an ALMAR that clearly focused on the importance of the program for tomorrow's Marine Corps. He was adamant that "we cannot improve the combat capability of the MAGTF without this LOGMOD [logistics modernization]." The program was now on a fast track.

The message took hold, and GCSS-MC was recognized as a Marine Corps leading enabler for change with endorsements from major stakeholders. With the approval of the ORD, the program was listed

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as a high-priority initiative by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and in March 2004, it was designated an Acquisition Category 1AM (ACAT 1AM) program with special interest implications for transformation and combat capability improvement. GCSS-MC was now sharing stature in the acquisition community with the expeditionary fighting vehicle.

Throughout early 2004, the GCSS-MC Program Management Office (PMO) grew to more than 30 professionals and received the necessary funding in POM 06 to continue development and implementation.

Software Provider—ORACLE

With the acquisition planning showing steady progress, it was time to acquire software. Marine Corps leadership provided the professionals to get the job done. Weeks were spent converting requirements documents into software acquisition requirements and demonstration scenarios. Training the Source Selection Evaluation Board members also took time to gain the knowledge to make the critical selection of the software a reality.

The software acquisition was completed using a standard full and open competition managed by MarCorSysCom. The strong collaboration among DC I&L; CG, MarCorSysCom; and CG, Logistics Command provided professionals who recognized the urgency of modernization. In August 2004 ORACLE was awarded the contract for the software business appli-

> "ORACLE is much more than just a software vendor; they are a partner for the long haul. I'm confident they will deliver more than shrink-wrapped software."
> —LtGen Richard L. Kelly

cation because they satisfied the functional requirements more completely, provided greater flexibility for future needs, and demonstrated understanding of the challenges.

To ensure that the software satisfied future concepts and current requirements, LtGen Kelly also created a transition task force that is working with Marine Corps Combat Development Command to prepare for—and transition—GCSS-MC-enabled capabilities into the Marine Corps baseline. But the job doesn't end there.

Subject matter experts have been deployed to configure business application software to maximize process improvements forged from the BPR initiatives.

SI, Accenture Team—The Final Piece

As part of an aggressive approach, there is the ever-present challenge to compress acquisition timelines for software availability. Consequently, in November 2004 the program manager elected to engage the OSD enterprise software initiative (ESI) process to select the SI. The ESI process used best practice strategies and presented a valuable option for rapidly selecting the SI. The process was to select from five highly qualified COTS integrators, all with experience in ORACLE applications and deep enterprise resource planning competence. By using this approach, the selection process was reduced by approximately 90 days. The final selection of Accenture was completed in April.

The Accenture team now joins the GCSS-MC team because their experience, knowledge, and familiarity with ORACLE products and systems integration are necessary to deliver the final solution based on Marine Corps requirements. It is the force behind completing the job.

The Road Ahead and the Toughest Mile

GCSS-MC will change the future for logistics support in the emerging battlespace. The program is a high-utility solution designed to satisfy operator requirements and fielded in a rapid manner to support deploying Marines worldwide. Logistics chain management Block I is GCSS-MC's first stage for developing a process that provides easy access to critical information. When implemented, ORACLE applications will complement a robust end-to-end process that expedites distribution of materials to the combatant. From the user perspective, Block I provides a single point of entry for logistics requirements while providing access to logistics chain information that supports the commander's intent and provides greater flexibility for the expeditious delivery of supplies throughout the battlespace.

GCSS-MC
Marches to the Acquisition Drummer

The target for GCSS-MC is to deliver a software product that will improve deployed logistics support for the Operating Forces. In terms of other key acquisition programs, it is in a state of relative infancy. The program was established as a program of record in 2003 and was designated as an ACAT 1AM in March 2004. MarCorSysCom is moving forward to meet an aggressive fielding schedule directed by the DC I&L. The program delivers desperately needed capabilities scheduled for Block I, and BGen Catto intends to put these capabilities in the hands of warfighting Marines on schedule. Acquisition management for the program features a different set of complex challenges since it is an information system using COTS business applications. The oversight from the DoN and OSD also causes the program to satisfy key requirements to ensure interoperability at the joint levels. It's a program for tomorrow's combatants.

At a recent OSD acquisition milestone meeting, BGen Catto confirmed, "The only reason we are doing this is to provide the support that our warfighters need and expect."

BGen Catto—accountable for GCSS-MC success.

MarCorSysCom has delivered experienced acquisition professionals to address the challenges and complexities of implementation. As a result of effective acquisition planning and key event management, the program has satisfied a difficult major activity in July 2004 and is maintaining momentum to cross the threshold for full production in late summer 2005.

Challenges, execution complexities, and overwhelming technical considerations *are* the road ahead. These challenges can be overcome through continuing collaboration and teamwork between the program manager; DC I&L; Commander, MarCorSysCom; and Accenture.

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>>LtCol Eckert is Chief Strategy Officer, IR Technologies. He provides acquisition support, change management, and communications management for logistics modernization including GCSS-MC. LtCol Eckert is a retired Marine who, since 1998, has organized numerous efforts to improve logistics information systems support to the Operating Forces.